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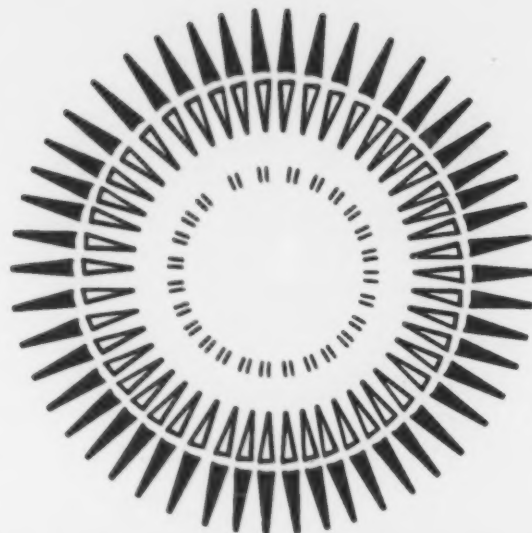
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ABSTRACT

This handbook has been built around the experiences of teachers and cognitive psychologists working together in opera education to identify, design, and produce an effective approach to bring together the divergent approaches to assessment and evaluation, mandated testing, and authentic documentation of learning. The handbook is designed to provide a distinct approach and practical tools for classroom teachers and specialists to document and assess the learning that takes place in their classrooms or learning centers. The book is divided into: (1) Overview; (2) "Guiding Principles"; (3) "Guidelines"; and (4) "Formats." (EH)

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EVIDENCE OF LEARNING:

The Learning Connection Evaluation Process for Opera/Music Theater

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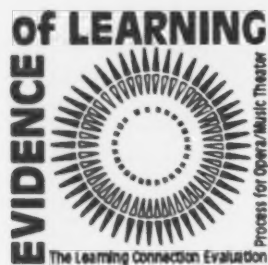
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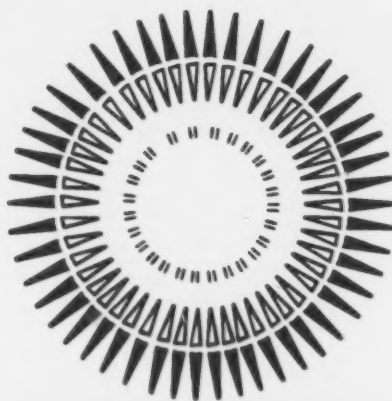
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Preface

Opera offers a unique opportunity for learning in the classroom. It is an art form that occurs in all cultures, as all peoples use music along with words, drama, and dance to express ideas. Each culture has its unique conventions—European or American works, Japanese Noh theater, Chinese Opera—but all use the same basic elements and all deal with ideas important to civilization.

Opera also is comprised of literature and theater, making it possible to fit directly into reading/language arts and theater curricula. It includes both instrumental and vocal music, relating directly to music curricula. Dance and design are integral to the art form, providing natural opportunities to relate to performing and visual arts curricula. In addition, opera deals with the human condition—the ways people live, think, and feel. It therefore correlates directly to social studies and humanities curricula. Opera is, in short, a naturally interdisciplinary art form that relates directly to standard school curricula.

Being involved in creating and producing original operatic works also involves students in kinesthetic, symbolic, musical, verbal, interpersonal, and intrapersonal activities. It therefore allows each student to enter learning in her/his own learning style. Bringing all of this together in one unified project permits students to grow by making "learning connections" naturally, building from their own strengths.

Because opera is an ideal integrated curriculum and offers multiple entry points and learning styles for students, it also provides an ideal opportunity to demonstrate the effectiveness of authentic assessment. This handbook has been built around the experiences of teachers and cognitive psychologists working together in opera education to identify, design and produce an effective approach to bring together the divergent approaches to assessment and evaluation: mandated testing and authentic documentation of learning. We call this approach *EVIDENCE OF LEARNING: The Learning Connection Evaluation Process for Opera/Music Theater*.



Editors' Note

"Evidence of Learning" is an approach to assessment and evaluation. It relies on the teacher to establish specific criteria for excellence using state, district and individual standards established across the disciplines. The approach brings together strategies from a variety of models, ranging from traditional test taking and student-teacher conferences, to more recent practices in using portfolios and peer reviews. The five-step process described herein guides the teacher in identifying standards and designing strategies to document authentic evidence of learning.

The most dominant model used in this manual is that developed under the auspices of Arts PROPEL, a well-known project undertaken in Pittsburgh, PA with a team from Harvard University's Project Zero. Specifically, many of the documentation techniques and the unique concept that became the "frames of reference" system advocated for portfolio building were largely based on the Arts PROPEL model. When customized and balanced with more traditional data gathering practices, as well as documentation of performance tasks and learning strategies, "evidence of learning" emerges. Teachers then have concrete information about what and how a student learns.

As teachers and students together review their authentic data, they will gain insights into both what was learned in subject areas and each individual's learning process. They also will have accurate information to share with peers, administrators, parents and the public. In these ways, learning does indeed become evident—and valued.

The editors wish to acknowledge colleagues and the many teachers across the country who developed and tested many of the forms provided in the booklet. Without their risk-taking, expertise, and feedback, this effort could not have been possible. Their suggestions not only helped in refining the "evidence of learning" approach, but often affirmed the ALTO Team through many difficult moments. To all of them, and all who find this booklet useful in improving learning and instruction, a heart-felt standing ovation!

EVIDENCE OF LEARNING: The Learning Connection Evaluation Process for Opera/ Music Theater

Assessment of students' achievement and program evaluation should not be conducted independently of the learning process. Therefore, the Learning Connection approach is based on the assumption that useful and illuminating evidence of learning relies on rich conditions for learning and systematic, appropriate documentation practices.

The purpose of this handbook is to provide a distinct approach and practical tools for classroom teachers and specialists to document and assess the learning that takes place in their classrooms or learning centers.

Overview

The Approach

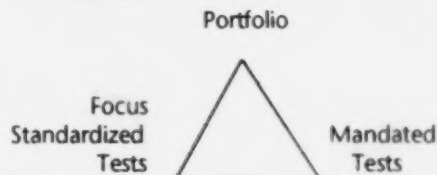
The Learning Connection Evaluation approach is based on a balance between testing and authentic documentation of evidence of learning. It broadens the assumptions held by the standardized test industry which frequently neglect learning that cannot be demonstrated through multiple choice or short answer quizzes. Engagement in learning, personal inquiry into a rich object of study, and interpersonal approaches to work are all valued by society and the work place. They are, however, typically not taken into account in the assessment process. In the Learning Connection Evaluation approach for opera they are keys to gaining insights into student learning and achievement.

The approach to assessment taken here argues that interpreting evidence of

learning depends first on effective documentation practices that draw students into a deeper understanding of their own experiences, creative work, and learning processes. Once rich forms of documentation have been collected in Learning Connection Portfolios they can be assessed for evidence of learning and achievement later. If the documentation is carried out with care, seeing evidence of learning in student portfolios provides ample evidence for the impact of units of opera study on children's lives.

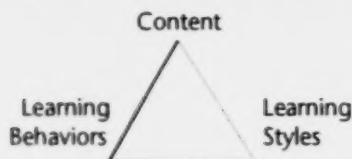
The Teacher's Role

As the teacher, or teacher team, you hold the pivotal position in the Learning Connection Evaluation Process. You design the methods and sequence of documentation and determine the specific criteria that will provide the basis for assessment and evaluation. The system may include focused standardized tests—for example—creativity, self-esteem, and aptitude—and other mandated tests of gathering information about student achievement. These data, however, must be balanced with more authentic evidence of each student's learning process, gathered during the actual process of learning and including the student's cognizant reflections on the meaning of what is being learned. Because the students are active participants in this form of assessment, you may wish to include them in designing the methodology:



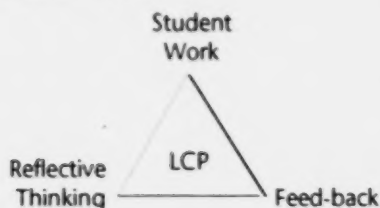
Your role in determining specific criteria is essential. Criteria—from the Greek word *krites* meaning to judge—should be based on a symmetry (1) among the content to be learned; (2) other chosen learning behaviors; and (3) consideration for students' individual learning styles. Students help to

identify the criteria to be used. It is you, however, who ultimately determines the appropriate school, state, and local mandates; curriculum outcomes; and student learning needs that each study unit addresses. Again, balance is needed, being sure that both external and internal criteria are identified.



The **external criteria** are easier to set. They are the criteria identified by experts, textbook authors, curriculum supervisors, and yourself. The **internal criteria** are those one sets for oneself—the standard that each student sets to assess her/his own learning. You can inspire, encourage, and guide the development of students' internal criteria. Experience, knowing the students, and intuition all come to your aid to guide students in setting internal criteria.

As you bring together internal and external criteria, scoring, and methodologies, you will form the **Learning Connection Portfolio (LCP)** which can be used in assessing student learning, and in program evaluation. The Learning Connection Portfolio is described as you follow this manual. Guideposts, suggestions, and insights from teachers are all provided to assist you.



The Results

The Learning Connection Evaluation's balanced approach **allows assessment to become a contributing factor in the student's learning process**, thereby helping both the student and the teacher. The strategies used in the approach allow students to understand not only how they learn, but how to assess their own learning. It allows you to communicate more explicitly with your students, their parents, and the community about what and how students are learning.

Guiding Principles

The Learning Environment

A **safe learning environment** is one in which the students feel comfortable taking learning risks; where they can question and experiment, and also understand the parameters for doing so. Constructing safe and stimulating learning environments—**where students create, analyze, and produce**—provide the best opportunities for powerful learning experiences. Such environments give confidence and security for learning. They also open the door to self-assessment.

It is important that students **develop confidence in themselves**. If they have confidence in their own potential abilities, they can become life-long learners. This is important because it extends learning beyond the classroom. This also means that students have learned to **use the tools of learning**. To use them, students must understand all these tools. Careful documentation of their learning process through observations, writing and illustrating, and questioning and discussing helps the students discover learning tools—including those for self-assessment—and how to use them.

Documenting Authentic Evidence of Learning

Whenever students are actively engaged in exploring subjects—reading, working in groups, inventing products, discussing issues—the teacher or even an outside observer can sense that intensive learning is taking place. After the experience is over, the dedicated teacher and the skeptic may ask the same question, "What will constitute evidence for learning?"

In order to seriously address this question, you must also consider **what you value in learning**.

You might ask three different types of questions:

"What **values, skills and knowledge** do I see as the most important learning outcomes of the curriculum unit?"

"What are characteristics or indications of moments of profound learning that I value? What do I observe in students' behaviors when they are learning?"

"What will administrators and parents accept as evidence of learning?"

Answers to these questions provide a basis for deciding on behaviors that will indicate learning-in-progress, as well as methods of assessment that will reveal the substance and kinds of learning that are taking place.

Indicators of Learning

Teachers frequently know when students have grasped an idea, understand a concept, or are ready to move on to another level of content information. The following are seven well-recognized indicators of learning:

- **Changing shifts in perspectives**—being able to see an idea or product from another perspective;
- **Assuming responsibility** for carrying an idea or product to completion;
- **Remaining engaged** in a project;
- **Becoming aware** of one's own level of understanding;
- **Being able to generate ideas or products** based on newly acquired knowledge;
- **Contrasting and comparing** relevant ideas;
- **Increased confidence** in using newly acquired knowledge.

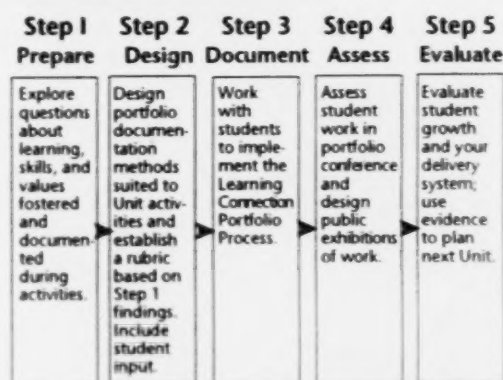
Determining Methods to Document Learning

To gain a more complete view of a student's learning it is necessary to **use diverse methods of documentation**. If, for example, "engagement" is a primary condition for learning, then you may design documentation to capture this aspect in **questionnaires, directed journal entries, or videotaped interviews with children**. If "developing and sustaining a line of inquiry" is a primary skill outcome, then you may design documentation of strategies that capture this aspect in students' work on **specific projects or research** into the unit of study.

Using the Evidence

Although the primary focus of assessment is on **helping students become more effective and efficient learners, the results of documented learning can also be shared beyond the classroom**. When documentation is exhibited or used for Learning Connection Portfolio conferences, parents or community members can have the opportunity to find evidence for learning through reviewing a wide array of documentation.

The Learning Connection Evaluation Process



The Learning Connection Evaluation process is comprised of **five steps** that lead to program evaluation as well as assessment of student learning.

1. **Prepare**—Exploring questions about learning
2. **Design**—Deciding how and when to use particular documentation strategies
3. **Document**—Implementing the documentation process
4. **Assess**—Analyzing student Learning Connection Portfolios. Appraising the relationship with mandated testing results
5. **Evaluate**—Making decisions and judgments about student growth and your delivery system

Using this approach, you build from a foundation of the kinds of learning you want and require for your students, design the methods of gathering the evidence you feel will document the learning, and end by you and your students being able to see the levels of

growth your students have achieved. You will also be able to see how effective your program and delivery system have been.

Step I. Explore Questions about Learning

Viewed from a distance, learning is about the acquisition of knowledge, comprehension, and mastery through study or experience. While that definition narrows the question about learning somewhat, it leaves some distance between the words and the experience. **If learning is personalized, then the documentation and portfolio collection should require and support individual differences in learning connections, evidence for ownership of the learning process, and examples of collaborative learning.** Furthermore, documentation processes should be designed to capture dimensions of learning, such as increased self-esteem, as well as to **assess the student as a maker/producer, perceiver, and reflector about a subject.**

In the following section we will see that when teachers like yourself question the characteristics and conditions for deep learning, they find elements that allow them to design documentation processes that follow the contour of learning. Notice how the personal values of teachers can establish criteria for the validity of documentation.

In an attempt to get closer to the moment of the learning connection, teachers in workshops at study sites around the United States were asked to describe and comment on a moment of significant learning in their own lives.

The effect of slowing down a moment of learning and looking at it with care is profound on the tellers and listeners alike. The teachers' stories of learning reflect sometimes subtle and often dramatic shifts of perspective; shifts that enable them to comprehend significant changes in their perceptions of ability, capacity, teaching, and learning, as well as insights into the nature of understanding. One teacher summarized her colleagues' comments by pointing out that they all involve a "surprise of confidence." This moment of awareness reflects the coming together or integration of **the expertise we each carry into a setting and the expertise that we discover we have and develop as we work.** It is a symptom of the "learning connection" that is the center of this Evaluation process.

Following are samples of the teacher comments. Some have to do with the learning environment, others about strategies and breakthroughs—all have to do with success in learning.

Learning Environment

- *First, the class was fun. The teacher was very enthusiastic and made the class exciting. Second, the teacher encouraged the students to find and develop their personal points of view.*
- *I was not encouraged to challenge as a child. I was always a good student and got good grades. But I never asked questions. Then I had this teacher who made us ask questions. Having to do this changed everything. It changed my life, that one moment of raising my hand to ask a question changed my life. It was so hard. It was the first class and no one knew anyone else.*
- *When I was in elementary school, we had this teacher who would put numbers on the board and ask us what number came next. Ever since then, I've liked to solve problems—without being told how to do them.*
- *People of all ages can discover solutions on their own. They need time to reflect, time to think about how to do it. And they need a place where they feel safe to take the risk to explore and discover their own ways.*

Risk! Freedom! Moving through and beyond fear! All clearly important to set the atmosphere to allow learning, and the documentation of learning.

Making Learning Connections

- *I don't know if I can describe it, but there turned out to be a bigger whole than there were parts. I mean, the whole-part relationships changed. And while we were working in our small group, there was increasing excitement.*
- *There was lots of risk-taking in our group. It was important that the expression of a range of emotions was encouraged and supported by everyone.*

- While we worked, there was sense of fusion, of increasing speed of ideas and flow, energy, and connections.
- I began to realize the role of frustration in learning. It became evident, as I thought about it, that a period of frustration preceded everything that was falling into place.
- It requires a great deal of persistence and confidence to break through a resistance beyond which lies new skills and concepts.
- The "learning connection" or "aha" appears to change our view of what we knew, our sense of self, and our interpersonal relationships. We begin to take risks.
- The group starts to get excited. Increasingly, they support one another's work.
- The pace of ideas and the flow of work speed up.
- Suddenly, the problem space is altered and transformed. We moved beyond the task in its original form and began to shape it in our own fashion.

A stronger sense of self! Being overwhelmed! Working through frustration! An excitement that comes from making connections and seeing things in new ways—evidence of learning. It is clear that reflecting on that moment helped teachers draw out and reveal connections that they were not aware of before when talking specifically about their own learning. Taking this one step further, **teachers suggested that significant learning involves (1) the confluence of diverse streams containing aspects of self-confidence, (2) risk-taking, (3) being challenged, and (4) being supported by trust in others.** It appeared to the teachers that the coming together of these factors was important in providing for a moment of learning.

Taking Ownership

- There is a feeling of owning concepts, of the importance of gaining command of a process or concept that accompanies learning.

- All of a sudden I knew how to do it. All that stuff I learned in college just came out. It really came together. It really clicked in. I was able to remember similar problems in the past, problems that I haven't thought of since I was in college. I was really pleased with myself.
- I discovered that I could think in ways that I never knew.
- I had a growing sense that I could figure things out on my own.
- I suddenly felt connected to the past. Not only my own past, but I had a new sense of what the past was, in terms of the subject.
- I was able to do it, feel it, and show it, and that's really important—do it, feel it, and show it.

Taking ownership fosters independence in learning. It also provides a feeling of being connected to one's own past and past traditions. This, plus an awareness of the capacity to use various ways of representing one's knowledge, makes a powerful experience.

Role of Co-learners

- Learning together to do things we couldn't do alone was exciting.
- Everyone shared in all the responsibility and took active roles in every part of the work.
- There was strong support for us and the members of the group, and that translated into great respect for the different areas and levels of expertise represented within the groups.

Instigators, catalysts, and supporters lead to breakthroughs in learning and understanding. Friends, co-workers, and strangers alike can play central roles in the learning process. The interpersonal aspect or context for learning helps everyone realize that each one had special qualities.



Summary

Learning is related to taking risks, moving through fear, making connections, developing a sense of ownership of ideas and process, trusting and relying on others, accepting oneself, and feeling good about ones' self-developing competence, ownership, and self-esteem with the help of others.

Teachers are clear about the issue of values. They maintain that developing a capacity for engagement, working in groups, being able to take and give criticism, to work to a standard, to compare and contrast relevant concepts, to make connections across different ways of knowing, different settings, and different disciplines, are all important values to maintain, document, and assess.

These features create the beginning point of authentic assessment. The design of documentation processes should be built on the reflective understandings of learning that experienced teachers bring to the learning experience.

Step 2. Design Documentation Methods and Establish Your Schedule for the Learning Connection Portfolio

In this section you will see how designing documentation for the Learning Connection Portfolio can draw on each teacher's views of significant moments of learning. Here, you will carefully lay out the steps to take in designing the documentation for portfolios. We will offer examples of the portfolio components—ready-to-use questions, journals, questionnaires, interview formats, etc.

At least three basic methods of gathering data should be used: (1) **Written or illustrative materials**—questionnaires, journals, etc.; (2) **Oral**—discussions and interviews conducted by teachers, parents, peers, or other mentors; (3) **Observation**—informally done during classroom participation; as well as formally, based on criteria established by the teacher. Criteria throughout should be developed with student input, as appropriate.

The Basic Structure of the Learning Connection Portfolio

A Learning Connection Portfolio is a place where a student can gather work that is related to a unit of study. It may take various forms: a folder, video tape, cassette tape, a box into which all the various forms of work can be kept. But, it is more than a simple collection of completed work. It contains first drafts, notes to oneself and to others, and perhaps interviews with peers or visiting experts—all kinds of materials. It should contain at least three kinds of material:

Student work: This includes exercises, research on topics, notes from discussions in class and with others, activities and exercises from the unit of study, as well as video tapes and photos with notes about significant features of them. A pre-test and post-test are recommended.

Reflective thinking: This includes notes about one's own work, the work of others, and the project in general, using various forms including questionnaires, journals, peer interviews, and short, reflective writings about the experiences of working in the unit of study.

Feedback: This includes notes and comments from others including teachers, parents, students, friends, peers who worked on the same projects or on other related projects.

Whatever tools a teacher chooses to document each of the three categories—student work, reflective writing, and feedback—it is important that they appear several times within the portfolio. This makes it possible to see the changes that the work has brought about. Several journal entries, questionnaires, and annotated sketches or photos will enable the student and the reader of the portfolio to reconstruct the steps in the learning process. These, in turn, will make the educational accomplishments of the project clear. The portfolio can be as simple or elaborate as you and the students choose.

A basic portfolio should include documentation methods that will show:

1. what individual students do in the project;
2. what individual students think about during the project; and

3. how **their understanding** of the issues intrinsic to the project **changes over time**.

Frames of Reference

To provide a **purposeful record of growth**, it will be necessary to include a repeated **"Frame of Reference."** If we imagine the Learning Connection Portfolio as a video showing growth over time, it is important to stop the video and study a particular frame. The Learning Connection Frame of Reference (Frame) is an **exercise, questionnaire, or recorded interview that is repeated at least three times during the course of study**. It should be fashioned in such a way that it will reveal how much the student has changed and learned during the intervals between "Frames." A Frame of Reference exercise might **contain things students make, along with their perceptions and reflections** related to the unit of study.

Progress Conferences

During a lengthy unit of study, it is important to **stop at intervals to talk with students** about what they have learned, why they are learning this content, and how the information can be used in other contexts. This is called a **Progress Conference** and can be conducted individually, in groups, or as a whole class. You can determine the appropriate intervals for Progress Conferences. They might take place at the time a "Frame" is implemented or after exploration of a particularly important concept, idea, or body of knowledge.

What a Learning Connection Portfolio Process Looks Like

The illustration from the Learning Connection Portfolio Process that follows shows a **plan for a very rich documentation of student learning** in a unit of study. The large arrows at the top and bottom indicate ongoing processes: teacher monitoring, student journals, and work samples collected in student portfolios. The work mandated as part of the curriculum is represented by the heavy lines radiating from the student activities and project box to the left, at the beginning of the study. Frames are repeated at least three times over the course of the unit of study. Various reflective thinking tools are indicated in ovals

(journals, questionnaires, interviews) while teacher, peer, and parent feedback is indicated below and to the right of the line.

Build the Design

Before you begin, ask **five questions** as a way to begin creating your Learning Connection Portfolio Process:

1. What specific purpose will the portfolio have in your class?

- What understandings do you want the students to gain?
- Is there a particular process or experience that should be documented to demonstrate growth?
- What materials from students' portfolios will be shown as an exhibit?
- Is the portfolio being used primarily as a means of communicating with parents?

2. What documentation tools of the portfolio process will you use?

- Which combinations will be most effective: journals; diaries; logs; questionnaires; collaborative conversations in the form of interviews; audio and video tapes of work in various stages of progress; or individual summaries of group discussions?
- Choose the tools you will be able to manage effectively in your classroom and plan to take the time to carefully choose and hone questions to be addressed by these tools.
- Start small with plans to expand.

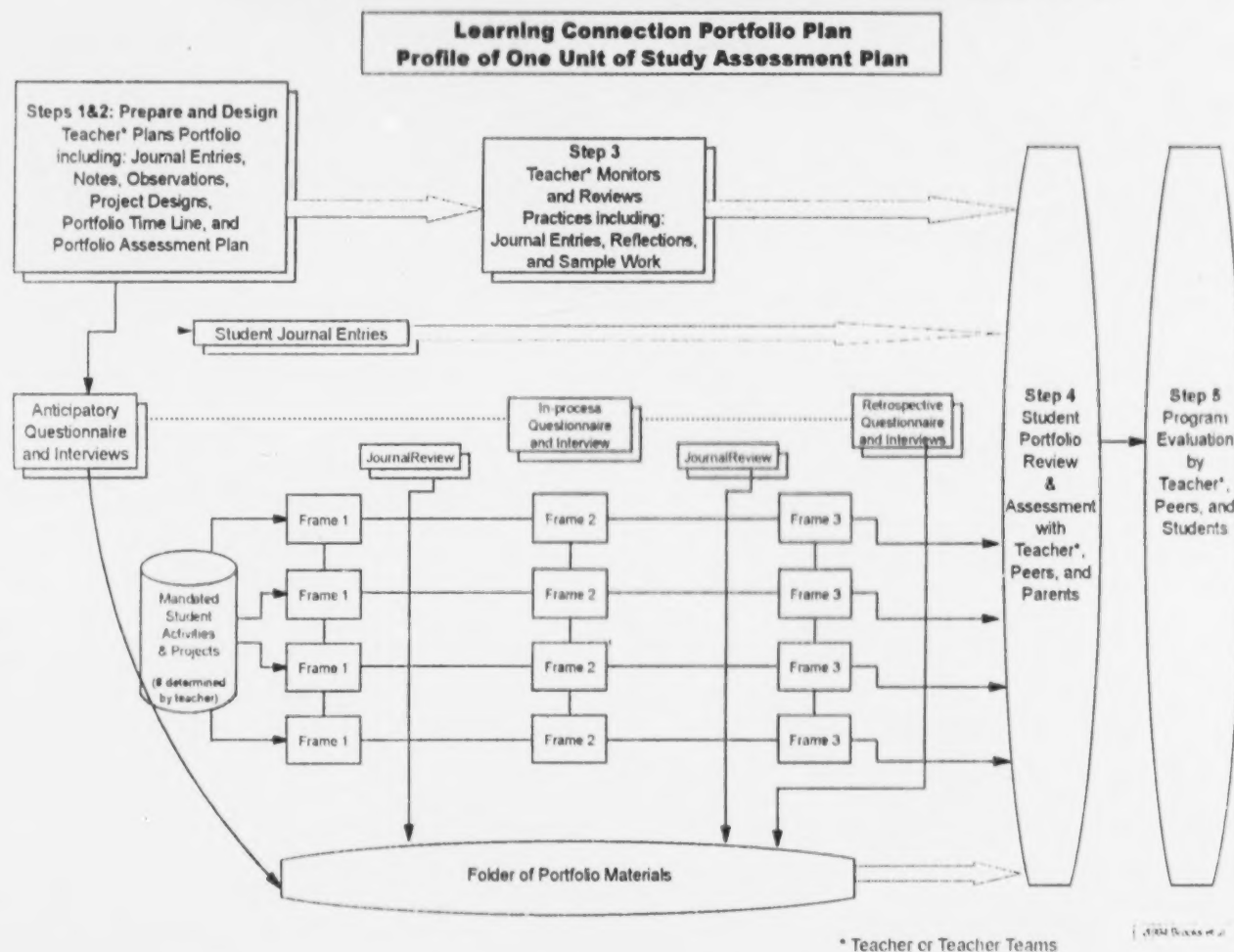
3. What design will capture the changes you expect in your students?

- Mix using journals, questionnaires, and interviews. Try to use both writing and more interactive formats. The responses even to the same questions vary depending on whether it is a directed writing assignment, a short answer questionnaire, or an interview.
- Alternate among different styles of journals: undirected writing,



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Learning Connection Portfolio Plan Profile of One Unit of Study Assessment Plan



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writing to a question or prompt, and double entry formats that can be skills. See examples of "prompt" journal ideas and a double entry format in the Guidelines and Format section of this booklet.

4. What dimensions do you plan to use to assess the portfolios?

Generally, assessment addresses the dimensions of (a) **production**—making a product, (b) **perceptual knowledge**—ability or quality of noticing facets of the work being done, and (c) **reflection**—ability to revise, re-think, re-experience moments of learning related to the unit of study.

5. How will you present the portfolio work to your students?

It is very important that the potential uses or audiences for the portfolio be **identified early so that students can carry out their work without fear of sudden changes in purpose or audience**. When presenting the idea of portfolios to students, try to get them involved in the design so they understand the concepts and have opportunities for input. Think of possible models from other arenas, for example: conversations, dialogues, autobiographies, biographies, and documentary films. Will students be able to make connections to their own lives? What kind of instructions will help the students understand the importance of their participation in documenting their learning? Be sure to announce that journals and portfolios will be reviewed periodically.

It may be useful to have students keep a "learning diary" which will not be reviewed. This will allow them to keep private notes about their learning journey. The learning diary does not replace the journal in their portfolio.

Determine criteria...

In consultation with the students, as appropriate to the learning situation, construct a "measuring stick" that will:

- reflect expected learning results;
- give you a **solid reference point**;
- give you **multiple views** of what

students are doing; and

- provide **evidence of the learning process** as well as products.

Devise a rubric...

In consultation with the students, as appropriate to the learning situation, determine a **system of scoring** that:

- reflects activities, changes in perception, and reflection;
- can be used over and over, when germane;
- will fit your style and needs; and
- can be used easily by students.

Decide...

When it will be most suitable to:

- use tools and formal, standardized, mandated tests;
- use **Frames of Reference** at least three times throughout the unit of study. Each time a Frame is implemented, it provides an opportunity for a **Progress Conference** with students, individually or as a group;
- use the Portfolio Plan on page 8 as a guide and develop a visual time line for the Documentation Process.

Prepare instruments...

Devise your **tools** for documentation. They may include:

- **products** to be created by the students;
- **writing** on an assigned topic;
- answering a focused question;
- creating **dialogues with you**;
- creating **dialogues with other students**;
- acquiring **new vocabulary**;
- stating and **supporting personal opinion**;
- making **comparisons**;
- drawing **parallels** to our lives;
- making a **summary**; and
- **standardized or mandated tests**.



Develop a timeline...

Guidelines and formats to assist in accomplishing these tasks are found in the Guidelines and Format portion of this book.

Step 3: Implement the Documentation Process

Putting your Learning Connection assessment plan into action began as you worked with your teacher team and/or the students to establish the criteria and rubric for the unit of study. It is now time to carry that action forward into the instructional and content learning processes. As you implement each part of the documentation process, consider alterations that better suit your and the students' needs. Mid-course adjustments can frequently strengthen the entire documentation process. Keep your timeline in view. Also, this kind of formative evaluation of the work being done will be useful in the final stage of the Learning Connection Evaluation process: Evaluation.

Step 4: Analyze Student Learning Connection Portfolios and Mandated Test Results

Reviewing the work done during the unit of study is an important time for both you and the students. It is the time to reflect on the entire unit of study and consider what has been learned and, equally important, why and how learning has occurred. If you have been conducting Progress Conferences (interviews) during the documentation process, this would be considered the final Progress Conference for the unit of study.

This also can be an excellent time and way to communicate with parents.

Conferences with each student along with her/his parent may be time consuming; however, it helps parents better understand what and how their child is learning. If parent/child conferences are not feasible, you might consider ways to share the portfolios with parents in another context. For example:

- at the time of a class or school production;
- during a special PTA meeting focused on assessment;
- by sending the portfolios home with feedback forms for parent comments.

Guidelines and questions in the back of this book may help you to prepare for assessment interviews and final Progress Conferences.

Step 5. Make Decisions and Judgments about Students' Growth and Your Delivery System.

In Step 5, you are encouraged to reflect on both your students' and your own learning during the unit of study. Using the results of student documentation and assessments, it will be possible to more adequately reach conclusions about students' individual achievements and learning styles. Equally important, the documentation accumulated during the Learning Connection Evaluation can be used in planning future student learning experiences.

Your self-assessment is an essential part of evaluating the unit of study and deciding directions for the future. By combining information from student assessments with your self-assessment, you can evaluate your delivery system. You can fairly answer questions like: What worked? Why? What didn't work? Why? Answers to these and similar questions will lead to developing more inspired and feasible learning experiences for your students. A self-assessment form is found in the Guidelines and Format section of this book.

Guidelines and Formats

Guidelines

The following guidelines can be copied and used as planning forms.

Timeline for Implementation

Learning Skills:

Educational Values:

Knowledge Reflection:

	Beginning Date	Ending Date
Written/ Illustration		
Journals		
Questionnaires		
Drawings & Models		
Oral		
Discussions		
Interviews		
Teacher		
Peers		
Parents		
Mentors		
Observations		
Formal		
Mentors		
Teacher		
Parent		
Frames of Reference		

Issues to Consider When Developing Assessment Strategies

1. The assessment practices are **systematic** because:

2. The **quality** of evidence is ensured by:

3. The evidence is **authentic** because:

4. The evidence is **reliable** because:

5. The goals and connections to goals are **valid** because:

"Frame of Reference" Exercise Guidelines

Class:

Date:

Title of Frame of Reference Exercise:

Objective of project:

Planned start date:

Expected duration:

Structure of Frame:

The three steps below are to be repeated at least two to three times. Frames of their work are to be taken at different times.

- Beginning activities:
- Middle activities:
- Final Activities:

Schedule of repetition of the Frame:

Changes in student **reflections** about their work will be documented through:

- Frequent use of journals;
- Discussion of project work with peers (written or taped);
- Videotape of the work as it develops which students review periodically.

Changes in student **perceptions** of their work will be documented through:

- The level of detail of their reflections and discussions;
- Criticisms of their own work and that of others;
- Revisions.

Changes in student **knowledge-in-performance** and handling of materials will be documented through drafts of their work (sketches, photos, video, audio).

How will the Frame be assessed **by the student**?

- Periodic reviews of work;
- Comparisons of early versions with later versions;
- Journals, questionnaire, peer interviews, and written instruments.

What are the curriculum connections?



The Learning Connection Opera Process Questionnaire and Interview Sequence

The questionnaire and interview sequence can be a tool for:

- documentation,
- student evaluation,
- self assessment, and
- sharing of work.

Entry Level Questionnaire/Interview

To be filled out by all students with limited help from instructional team.

Topics covered in the questionnaire include:

- personal and family background,
- personal taste and goals, and
- past experience with opera.

Second Level Questionnaire/Interview

To be filled out by all students during the school year with teaching team, peer, or parent ensuring some in depth responses to questionnaire (peers or teaching team may occasionally interject more questions to follow up on written responses in order to elicit further responses or more specific examples). Topics raised in the entry level questionnaire should be explicitly addressed in order to trace changes in responses over time.

Closing Portfolio Questionnaire/Interview

To be conducted by teaching team at the end of the school year or marking period. Past work with projects, extra curricular work, and past questionnaires should all be available to the team and student during the interview.

A general interview format will be adapted by the team, but specific questions, follow-up questions, and listening activities will be designed or improvised by the individual instructor. Students may prepare for this closing interview by pre-selecting materials (e.g., best work, problems to be worked on next year, pivotal pieces, etc.), rehearsing the interview with parents or peers, and/or providing a 'cover letter' summarizing their year's work.



Types of Questions to Ask

Questions are very important tools for the opera instructional strategies you develop because they will help students make connections between their work in opera and what they are doing in their other classes.

Student learning and understanding are revealed largely through responses to questions, **especially those that are repeated throughout the project.** Consequently, the most successful opera instruction programs will document those learning connections that students make. The Learning Connection Process Portfolio is a useful tool for recording questions and student responses.

Opera Process Questions

Questions framed around the central components of opera instruction:

Beginning

- How did you feel when we first began the opera activity?
- What do you expect to learn?

During

- Did your feelings change as the activities progressed, and if so, how?
- What made your feelings change?
- What was it about the activities that created this change?
- What have you learned about opera so far?
- What tasks helped you understand your work most effectively?
- As the task became more complex, was it easier, harder, or the same for you?

Ending/Review

- Now that you have been through all this, how do you feel about opera now?



Metacognitive Questions

Connecting the opera process to other classroom work and our everyday life:

Beginning

- After having analyzed the task which you have been assigned, what connections with your classroom work do you think you will discover?

During

- What parallels or non-parallels do you see between the opera process in which you are engaged and the kinds of problems you encounter in everyday life?
- What steps or sequence of activities have you gone through so far in the opera process and what do you think you can learn from them? How might they apply to other situations?

Ending/Review

- Now that you have completed your opera project, how would you persuade friends that they can take what was learned from this project and apply it to their everyday lives?



Formats

The following pages may be copied.

Learning Connection Opera Journal

Date:

Name:

Grade:

1. As I review everything I have done in the opera unit up to now, I find that I have learned (name at least three things)

a.

b.

c.

2. The best thing we did was

3. I learned the most from

4. I am most proud of

5. If other students were to begin to work on opera projects the way we have, I would tell



Learning Connection Opera Journal

Date:

Name:

Grade:

1. What was the most important thing you learned this week in our work in opera?

2. What activity could you make up that would help you teach that to another student?
(You can draw diagrams or pictures to help explain it)

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**Learning Connection Exit Slip Questions
to Assess Daily Opera Progress #1**

Name:

Grade:

Date:

Activity:

How I did today:

How I might improve:

Comments:



**Learning Connection Exit Slip Questions
to Assess Daily Opera Progress #2**

Name:

Grade:

Date:

Activity:

How my group did today:

How we might improve:

Comments:

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[SAMPLE]

Learning Connection Parent At-home Student Interview

Date:

Dear _____

Our class is working on an opera project. This project includes reading, writing, analyzing, and creating original works. It is important that students connect this work with other parts of their lives. We ask you, therefore, to spend a little time talking with your child about the work we are doing in opera. Because your participation is so important to the success of your child in school, it is critical that you take part in this activity as well.

We encourage you to speak with your child about work that will be sent home periodically. The documents that accompany this note represent some of what we do. Please discuss it with your child. To facilitate this discussion we have included several questions that we would like you and your child to answer. Before doing so, ask for a guided tour of the work in the folder. What does it mean to your child? Please return this sheet and the work after you have had this most important conversation.

Sample Questions and Comments for Parents/Guardians to Pose to Children

- I don't know what this work is. Tell me how you did it.
- Pretend you don't know me. What piece of work are you most proud of? Tell me why? (Perhaps ask students how do they feel about it? Why is it important to them?)
- Note that there are several versions of the same piece of work, each one a revision of an earlier one. Ask why the changes were made. Discuss the need to make revisions in work that you do.

Parent Questions

After discussion with your child, please take a few minutes to answer the following questions:

What is your impression of the work you see?

What role does it appear to have in your child's school life?



Learning Connection Opera Questionnaire #1

Date:

Name:

Grade:

1. When I think of the opera project, I think about

2. We are working on the opera project because

3. As we work on the opera project, I expect that we will

4. I think the hardest thing about it will be

5. I think the best thing about our project work will be

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Learning Connection Opera Questionnaire #2

Date:

Name:

Grade:

1. I think the best thing about our opera project so far has been

2. If another class wanted to work on an opera project, I would tell them to

3. As we work more on the opera project, I would like to

4. The hardest thing so far has been

but,

5. Now when I think of the opera project I think about



**Learning Connection
Opera Questionnaire #3**

Date:

Name:

Grade:

1. The best thing about the opera project work so far has been

2. If another class wanted to learn about the opera project, I would be sure to tell them

3. As we work more on the opera project, I would like to

4. The hardest thing for me so far has been

but,

5. I would want someone who didn't know about the opera project to know about

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**Learning Connection
Opera Questionnaire #4**

Date:

Name:

Grade:

1. If another class wanted to work on an opera project, I would tell them to think about

2. As we worked with the composition process, I learned

3. The hardest thing for me was

but,

4. When I think of the opera project now, I think about

5. I think the best thing about our opera project was



**Learning Connection
Opera Questionnaire #5**

Date:

Name:

Grade:

How I did.

How I might improve.

How my group did.

How we might improve.

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Learning Connection Opera Interview #1

Date:

Name:

Grade:

1. What do you think an opera might be?

Keywords:

Sentence:

2. What do you think you might find in an opera?

Keywords:

Sentence:

3. What do you think you can learn about opera?

Keywords:

Sentence:

4. What will be the hardest thing about working on an opera?

Keywords:

Sentence:

5. What will be the best thing about our opera work?

Keywords:

Sentence:

Learning Connection Opera Interview #2

Date:

Name:

Grade:

1. What has been the best thing about our opera work so far?

Keywords:

Sentence:

2. If another class wanted to work on an opera, what would you tell them?

Keywords:

Sentence:

3. What would you like to do next in the opera project?

Keywords:

Sentence:

4. What has been the hardest thing for you so far?

Keywords:

Sentence:

5. How would you explain the opera project?

Keywords:

Sentence:

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Learning Connection Opera Interview #3

Date:

Name:

Grade:

1. What has been the best thing about our opera project work so far?

Keywords:

Sentence:

2. If another class wanted to work in opera, what would you tell them?

Keywords:

Sentence:

3. What would you like to do next in opera?

Keywords:

Sentence:

4. What has been the hardest thing for you so far?

Keywords:

Sentence:

5. How would you explain the opera project?

Keywords:

Sentence:



Learning Connection Opera Interview #4

Date:

Name:

Grade:

1. If another class wanted to work on an opera project, what would you tell them?

Keywords:

Sentence:

2. What did you learn as we worked on our opera projects?

Keywords:

Sentence:

3. What was the hardest thing for you?

Keywords:

Sentence:

4. What do you think of when you think of the opera now?

Keywords:

Sentence:

5. What do you think the best thing about our opera work was?

Keywords:

Sentence:



Teaching Team Opera Project Self-Assessment Sheet

Teaching Team:

Class:

Date:

Title of project:

1. Describe briefly how the project worked: in general and at its various stages.

2. How did the actuality differ in any way from the original plans?

3. Describe a few convincing instances when significant learning occurred during (or connected to) this project.

[over]



4. Note any surprises you had during this project.

5. What was the most successful aspect of your teaching techniques during this project?

6. What was your experience of the project?

7. Assuming you would want to try something like this again, how might you refine/revise/refocus such a project next time? What would you be trying to accomplish with any changes?